Morristown

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Morristown National Historical Park
New Jersey

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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1779–80

The weather was cold enough to cut a man in two.
—Pvt. Joseph Plumb Martin, 8th Connecticut Regiment

For two agonizing winters, Morristown sheltered the main body of the Continental Army under Gen. George Washington. In early 1777 the general rebuilt and reorganized the young army. Two years later, the harshest winter in decades, some 10,000 soldiers endured relentless cold and snow, meager supplies, and constant hunger. Led by Washington and mustering their own determination, they emerged as a cohesive force.

Since the Revolutionary War, each generation has found its own way of telling Morristown's story and honoring those who lived it. These chapters unfold in many ways at Morristown National Historical Park. Exhibits display artifacts lovingly preserved by soldiers' families. Restored homes remind us that war affected civilians. Original encampment sites are places to contemplate those trying winters or take a walk in the woods.

Above: An imagined scene shows many of the Ford Mansion's occupants outside as Martha Washington arrives in late 1779 to join her husband at his winter quarters. *From left:* George (1776) and Martha (1772) Washington portraits by Charles Willson Peale; Washington's dress sword from first inauguration; makeshift frying pan fashioned from a shovel; Brown Bess musket; Joseph Plumb Martin's first-hand account of his experience as a Revolutionary War soldier; Isaac Whitehead's canteen.

ALL PHOTOS NPS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED. FORD MANSION AND ENCAMPMENT PAINTINGS —NPS / KEITH ROCCO; GEORGE AND MARTHA WASHINGTON PORTRAITS—© COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION; BROWN BESS MUSKET—THE GEORGE C. NEUMANN COLLECTION, VALLEY FORGE NHP

Morristown, protected behind the Watchung Mountains from British forces 30 miles east in New York City, was a strategic choice for the Continental Army's 1777 winter encampment. Soldiers sought shelter wherever they could—in public buildings, private homes, stables, barns, sheds, and tents.

Gen. George Washington hoped to spend the winter rebuilding and retraining his war-weary army, but it dwindled further because of desertions and expired enlistments. Then smallpox struck. Washington's decision to inoculate soldiers and civilians alike saved countless lives. Reinforcements finally arrived in spring 1777, and the army moved out in June.

During the winter of 1779–80, at least 20 snowstorms cut supply lines for food, clothes, and shoes. "The weather was cold enough to cut a man in two," wrote Pvt. Joseph Plumb Martin. Despite the conditions, the business of maintaining the 10,000-man army continued. Thousands of acres of trees were felled for over 1,000 log huts, built in precise rows on the hillsides. Huts housed 12 enlisted men; field officers had larger quarters. Units from each state generally encamped as a group.

Routine work included hauling and chopping wood, cooking, digging latrines, troop inspections, and guard duty. Many soldiers were accompanied by wives and children. Two women gave birth in camp.

Theodosia Ford, widow of Jacob Ford Jr., a colonel in the local militia, allowed Washington to use her large home as his headquarters. Ford and her four children squeezed into two rooms while Washington and his senior staff took over most of the house.

On New Year's Eve 1779, Martha Washington arrived to spend the winter with her husband. Like other officers' wives, she traveled to her husband's winter quarters every year.

Hastily built additions (since removed) provided an office for the aides and a kitchen for the headquarters. Servants and slaves tended to domestic duties. Military guards stood watch over a constant stream of visitors. Washington wrestled with the problems of the army and the precarious coalition of states that was not yet a nation. The Continental Congress could not fund the army, and ruinous inflation made the purchase of badly needed food and clothing almost impossible.

The general sought help from neighboring New Jersey counties and other states. The response from New Jersey was immediate and generous; it "saved the army from dissolution, or starving," wrote Washington.

In May 1780 the Marquis de Lafayette arrived at the Ford Mansion with welcome news of aid from France. The next month the camp dispersed, as the last of the troops were ordered into battle yet again.

Continental Army Winter Camps
Units directly under George Washington

1775–76 Cambridge, Massachusetts

Early 1777 Morristown, New Jersey

1777–78 Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

1778–79 Redding, Connecticut, and Middlebrook, New Jersey

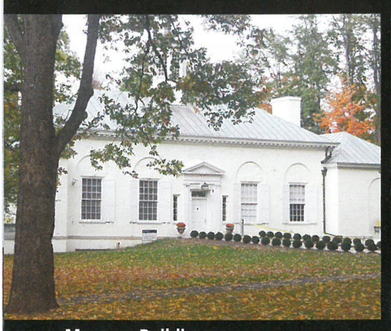
1779–80 Morristown (Jockey Hollow)

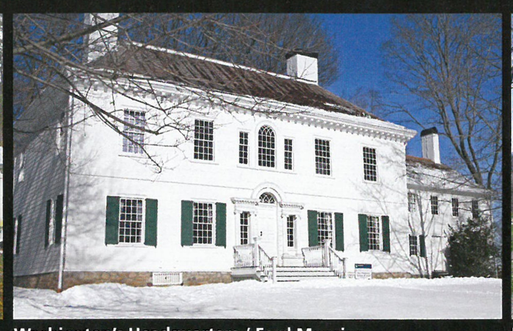
1780–81 and 1781–82 Hudson Highlands of New York, and Morristown area

1782–83 New Windsor, New York

Above: An imagined scene depicting typical daily activities at the Pennsylvania Line encampment, 1779–80.

Morristown Past and Present


Museum Building

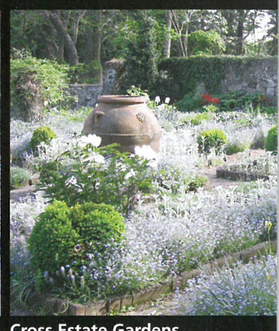

Washington's Headquarters / Ford Mansion

Fort Nonsense

Jockey Hollow Visitor Center
NPS / ERIC OLSEN

Wick House

Pennsylvania Line Encampment Site


Cross Estate Gardens

Note: Numbers correspond to sites labeled on the map below.

1 Museum and Visitor Information Designed by John Russell Pope, the Colonial Revival-style building was completed in 1937. Exhibit galleries focus on 18th-century domestic life of wealthy families like the Fords; military tactics, weapons, strategy, and camp life; and the Lloyd Smith collection of rare manuscripts and books. Information desk, museum store, exhibits, short movie, tickets for Ford Mansion tours. Entrance fee for museum.

Left: Volume by "patriot poet" and freed slave Phillis Wheatley; she visited Washington at his Cambridge, MA, headquarters in 1776. *Below:* Society of the Cincinnati punch bowl commemorating Col. Richard Varick's service as an officer in the Continental Army.

2 Washington's Headquarters / Ford Mansion From December 1779 to June 1780, this was Washington's quarters and base of operations. Ranger-led tours only; admission included with museum fee.

3 Fort Nonsense In May 1777 Washington's troops fortified this strategic crest with earthworks and trenches.

4 Jockey Hollow Encampment Area and Visitor Center Some 10,000 Continental Army soldiers camped in this area during the winter of 1779–80. Visitor center has information desk, exhibits, reproduction hut, short movie, and gift shop.

5 Wick House Henry Wick and his family lived in this New England-style house on a 1,400-acre farm. During the 1779–80 encampment, Gen. Arthur St. Clair made his headquarters here.

6 Pennsylvania Line Encampment Site Precise rows of log huts on this hillside housed 2,000 soldiers during the 1779–80 encampment. Replica huts open.

7 Grand Parade This field was the center of camp life. Even in the harshest winter weather, soldiers gathered daily for inspections, guard detail, and drilling. General orders were issued from the orderly office (no longer standing), the camp's administrative headquarters.

8 Stark's Brigade Encampment Site A monument on the hillside marks the encampment site of Brig. Gen. John Stark's 1,270 men from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. *Note: Walk-in site only.*

9 New Jersey Brigade Encampment Site About 900 soldiers of the New Jersey Brigade, the last group to arrive that winter, encamped on a steep plot of land. *Note: Walk-in site only.*

10 Cross Estate Gardens The early 20th-century landscape of the Cross Estate includes a formal perennial garden, native plant garden, pergola covered by wisteria, pathway bordered by mountain laurel, and several large specimen trees.

Trails for Everyone

The park has about 27 miles of designated hiking trails. Ranging in difficulty from easy to moderate, the trails let you experience natural beauty while also exploring Revolutionary War history.

The 2.25-mile Yellow Trail connects the key historic and interpretive sites throughout Jockey Hollow. The White Trail/Grand Loop Trail is the longest trail in Jockey Hollow—6.5 miles. The Blue Trail, 3 miles roundtrip, includes the Stark's Brigade encampment site, which offers the best view of the landscape from Mt. Kemble. While hiking in the park please keep your pets on a leash at all times. You can print a trail map and park map from the park website. Morris County's 35-mile, multiuse Patriots' Path connects several dozen natural and historical sites. Printable maps are available at www.morrisparks.net. Bicycles are only allowed on the 3-mile-long paved Tour Road. Biking is not allowed on hiking trails.

Civilian Conservation Corps builds trails, 1930s.

Each season has its own beauty along park trails.

New Jersey and the American Revolution

Because of its central location among the American Colonies and its well-developed transportation, provisioning, and defense systems, New Jersey played a key role in the struggle for independence.

Within the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, New Jersey's rich history unfolds—from Fort Lee at the Palisades to Red Bank Battlefield on the Delaware River. The national heritage area covers 2,155 square miles over 14 counties. Historic sites; preservation groups; historical societies; friends organizations; state, county and local governments; and schools, libraries, and museums work together to tell the stories of the American Revolution and New Jersey's key contributions to building the nation.

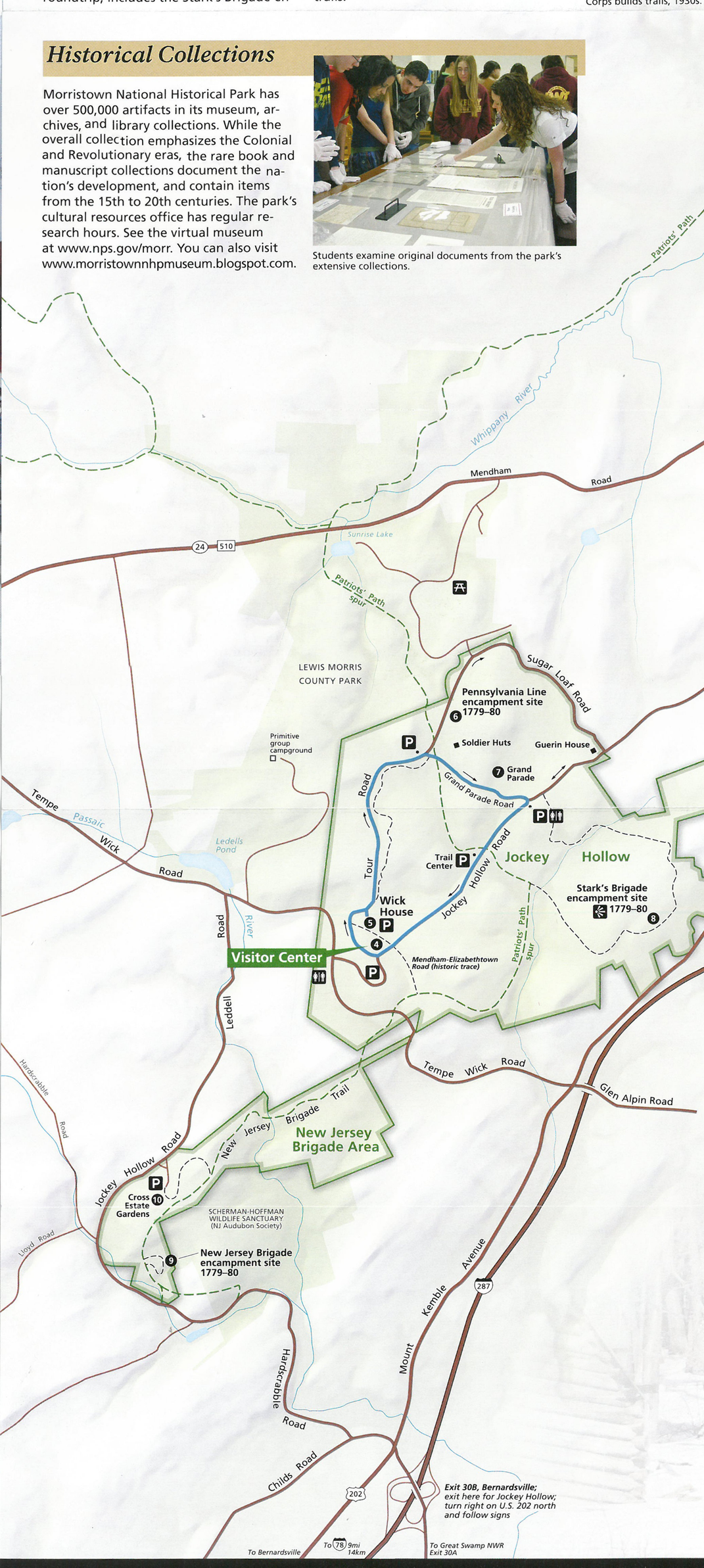
For information and a virtual tour, visit www.revolutionarynj.org.

Catch a live demonstration on encampment weekend.

Historical Collections

Morristown National Historical Park has over 500,000 artifacts in its museum, archives, and library collections. While the overall collection emphasizes the Colonial and Revolutionary eras, the rare book and manuscript collections document the nation's development, and contain items from the 15th to 20th centuries. The park's cultural resources office has regular research hours. See the virtual museum at www.nps.gov/morr. You can also visit www.morristownnhpmuseum.blogspot.com.

Students examine original documents from the park's extensive collections.



Planning Your Visit

The park grounds are open daily 8 am to sunset. Park buildings' hours and days of operation vary seasonally. Before you visit, please call or check the website for updated schedules of park hours, Ford Mansion tour times, and other activities. The park is closed on Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, programs, and services accessible to all. For information, ask a ranger, check at the visitor center, call, or visit our website.

Stay Safe, Protect the Park Federal law protects all natural and cultural features. • Collecting objects, using metal detectors, and digging for relics are all prohibited. • Do not allow your visit to be spoiled by an accident. While every effort has been made to provide for your safety, there are still hazards that require visitor alertness. • Watch for uneven walking surfaces when in and around historic buildings or on the trails. • Avoid poison ivy and protect yourself against ticks and other insects. • Keep your pets leashed at all times and keep the park healthy by cleaning up after your pet. • Do not feed wild animals. • For firearms laws and policies, see the park website.

Emergencies call 911

More Information
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www.nps.gov/morr

Morristown National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about the National Park Service, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation
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www.nationalparks.org

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Reconstructed soldiers' huts

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